

# Working Effectively in/with Local Health Departments

Jeffrey L. Lake, MS

Deputy Commissioner for CHS

February 27, 2003

# Overview

- Relationships
- Communication
- VDH 101
- State-Local Dynamic
- Partnerships
- Information
- Take Home Lessons

# Relationships

- The best time to make a friend is before you need one
- "Reach out"
- Think twice, no three times, before you burn a bridge
- Any deal I am not a part of; I am against
- Trust is a walk across time
- Credibility takes years to build and can be lost in the blink of an eye



# Relationships continued....

- The story of the Four Phases of Everyone's Career
- Always look for a natural opening to raise a difficult issue rather than scheduling a meeting to discuss it
- If it's not optional, don't lead someone to believe it is. Focus on the flexibility a district has in terms of how to get the job done.

# Relationships continued....

- Squeaky wheels get the grease, but a steady diet of grease is not good for you.

# Communication

- The eight most important words you should know and practice
- Some days you go to school to teach and some days you go to school to learn
- Those that know aren't talking and those that are talking don't know
- Four parts of all human interaction – How I see myself. How I see you. How you see yourself. How you see me.



# Communication continued....

- The tale of two ears and one mouth
- It is hard to listen with your mouth open
- Bad news does not improve with age
- You must have a high tolerance for ambiguity to work here
- Think before you speak – it is hard to take something back after you've said it

# VDH 101

- Mistakes – try not to make the same ones over and over and try not to make a whole bunch of big mistakes at the same time – both are hard to recover from
- Four indicators of job satisfaction
- The more different things you can do for the agency, the more valuable you'll become
- The wind blows hardest at the top of the trees
- Those are deeper waters than I swim in



# VDH 101 cont....

- You are hoeing too close to the row
- Pick battles big enough to matter and small enough to win
- Don't get out ahead of your runway
- Work out problems at the level closest to your home base
- You can't die on every hill - When you are encountering resistance, ask yourself, "is the juice worth the squeeze?"

# State-Local Dynamic

- When the state calls, I am busy doing local work and when the locals call, I am busy doing state work....
- Avoid playing the “blame game”
- The story of the Three Envelopes
- The Copernican theory of public health

# Partnerships

- Involve partners in the lift off and not just the landing
- Easy partnerships are with those who share our values
- Hard partnerships are ones where we are asked to share our money
- Connect the dots for your partners when we are asking them to help us with multiple projects



# Partnerships cont.

- When you need a favor from a partner, get somebody to ask him/her that he or she will have a hard time saying no to....

# Information

- Information – drink from a fountain, not a fire hose
- Boil a cow down to a bullion cube
- Figure out what your audience needs to know; there is no reason to tell everyone everything you know

# Take Home Lessons

- EP&R is the most important to everyone in this room **AND** it is one of about 25 programs and services operated by each district.
- When you've met one health director, you've met one health director
- Don't ass/u/me anything
- You don't have to comment on the first thing someone says with which you disagree. If you do, it shuts down the interaction.



# Take Home Lessons continued...

- Be serious in your purpose, but don't take yourself too seriously
- You catch more flies with honey than you do with vinegar
- "I need your help" is always preferred to "Do this"
- It is easier to prevent problems than to solve them
- Change is good; you go first - Dilbert